

46

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 42ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE HELD AT
CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1, ON FRIDAY, SATURDAY
AND SUNDAY APRIL 19TH, 20TH, and 21ST 1946.

The General Secretary called the conference to order at 11 a.m. on Friday 19th April.

<u>Chairman</u>	-	A. Price
<u>Vice-Chairman</u>	-	A. Snellgrove
<u>Tellers</u>	-	Crasko, Fernwick, Flitter, Robertson and Wood.

REPORT OF THE 42ND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

E.C. ATTENDANCES

Item for discussion (i) - Glasgow branch. "Provincial representation on the E.C."

A Glasgow delegate said that it was not possible at present for provincial branches to be represented on the E.C. and conference should discuss ways and means of remedying this. Travelling expenses presented no problem, there being ample funds. Other delegates said that E.C. members were not elected to represent branches, but the party. There was no solution with the present constitution of the E.C. E.C. procedure should be revised with a view to less frequent meetings, say once a month. The E.C. should deal with questions of principle only, other matters being referred to a General Purposes Committee. A central point other than London for E.C. meetings was suggested as a way out. Provincial branches were asked to put forward practical solutions at the next Delegate Meeting.

Resolution - Thorburn and Prout (Glasgow) "That the conference recommends the E.C. to investigate ways and means of furthering provincial representation on the E.C." Lost 7-22.

Item for discussion (ii) - Leeds branch. "The E.C. to consider the possibility of speeding up the business of their meetings and, if necessary, meeting more frequently, in order to avoid the lateness of arrival of answers to business letters and the loss of time incurred during E.C. meetings due to their dealing with correspondence from non-party people"

Leeds delegate complained of the time which elapsed during the propaganda season in writing to them regarding speakers who were coming to Leeds. Sometimes notification was received only two or three days before the speaker arrived. The time spent on the Dawson business was criticised. The General Secretary stated that delays were not due to the E.C., but that many items had to be dealt with by sub-committees. Correspondence on the E.C. was dealt with without loss of time. Very little time had been spent on dealing with Dawson. Suggestion was again made that a ways and means committee should be set up to deal with routine matters. Other branches expressed satisfaction with the speed with which the E.C. replied to correspondence.

Item for discussion (iii) - Islington branch. "The advisability of paid members serving on the Executive Committee"

It was claimed that paid members would be influenced in their decisions as they obtained their livelihood from the party. This was denied on the grounds that the basis of all membership was socialist understanding.

Resolution - Roass and West (Hackney) "Next business" Cd. 28-11.

BRANCHES AND MEMBERSHIP

The General Secretary said that 550 of the total membership lived in London.

(b) Discussion Groups. The General Secretary said that the groups had radio collections of £82 and sold approx. 25,000 of literature during 1945. He gave other figures on grants made to them and balances held. 89 indoor and 22 outdoor meetings had been held. 6 branches had been formed from groups since their inception. All groups were controlled by party members.

(c) Report of Central Organiser. Objection was raised to the Central Organiser's reference to "unfortunate experiences of premature establishment of branches in the past" and his claim that Forms 'F' usually seemed to cancel out Forms 'A' and the membership figures stagnate". It was said that over recent years there was no justification for the first statement, and that the membership figures given by the E.C. in the report did not support the second. The Central Organiser answered that the danger of the premature formation of branches was known to everyone with experience of the party and that he doubted the accuracy of the membership figures given, no adequate records being in existence. The General Secretary replied that the membership register was kept up to date and revised annually in consultation with all of the branches and that it was complete and accurate. The Central Organiser added that his remarks regarding membership figures arose from his own observation at E.C. meetings when Forms "A" and "F" were tabled. A delegate said that the most serious aspect was that 63 members had left the party during the year and efforts should be made to find the real reason for this.

Resolution - Lawrence and Howard (Bloomsbury) "That this conference rejects the last paragraph in the Central Organiser's report, as it is not of the opinion that the view expressed regarding stagnation of membership figures is in conformity with the facts as given under the item 'Branches and membership'"

Addendum - Matthews and Adams (Edgware) "Add 'and that this conference protests against other inaccuracies in the Central Organiser's report!'"

Bloomsbury in opening said that it was harmful to claim that the party was stagnating when facts and figures proved the contrary. The statement should have been backed up by evidence and not based on casual observation. The General Secretary urged that statements should not be made without full supporting evidence and that it would be harmful if the party adopted the practice of making sweeping unproved statements. Another delegate regretted the manner in which the Central Organiser had made his remarks but that the spirit of his statement was correct. If we approached the question in a broad general way over a period, it was true to say that the party had not grown to a great extent.

ORDER OF BUSINESS. A Bloomsbury delegate asked that time should be allocated for the discussion of "Items for discussion xvi, xvii and xviii."

Resolution - Howard and Lawrence (Bloomsbury) "That 'Items for discussion xvi, xvii and xviii' be taken next business"

There was a short discussion on this motion, during which a motion to hear Comrade Turner was carried.

Resolution - Lawrence (Bloomsbury) and McLean (Brixton) "That the vote be taken" Cd. 35-5. The resolution was Cd. 31-17.

(c) Report of Central Organisation (Cont.) The addendum was supported on the grounds that some statements regarding the proposed dissolution of Leeds branch were inaccurate. This proposal had been put forward by one member only and was opposed by the other members of the branch. When the General Secretary was asked if the E.C. could not amend an inaccurate report he replied that there would have to be very good reasons for altering the report of an official selected by the party. The Central Organiser said that he took a very critical attitude to figures and entries in books. They did not tally with his own visits to groups and branches. He was dissatisfied with the progress made and something should be done to find out why members left the party. He suggested that war-time conditions had paled their part in causing a fluctuating membership.

The addendum was Lost 17-21.

The resolution was Cd. 33-14.

Item for discussion (xvi) - Bloomsbury. "The party and its task In the Immediate Future"

Item for discussion (xvii) - Edgware. "That party activities over a number of years having been shown to be relatively ineffectual, an all out effort now be made to become known nationally by increased local activity supported where necessary from Head Office and by any other methods approved by the conference"

Item for discussion (xviii) - Camberwell. "This conference notes the lack of progress among the industrial section of the working class and urges that steps be taken to remedy this defect by widespread propaganda whenever and wherever opportunity presents itself"

The Bloomsbury delegate in opening referred to a memorandum his branch had circulated to other branches prior to the conference for consideration in conjunction with their item for discussion. The biggest single barrier to our progress was that so many had never heard of us. The drive must be to make ourselves known nationally. In the past we had had financial handicaps but more money is available now. We must get into the provincial towns and thus into the provincial press. Great strides could be made if we could organise propaganda in areas such as Newcastle, Liverpool, Sheffield, S.Y., Lancashire etc. South Wales itself offered a vast field. London was relatively well served with voluntary propagandists and as an immediate practical proposition the appointment of two provincial organisers was suggested. The next step should be to publish more pamphlets and issue a fortnightly "S.S.". Arrangements for the latter should be made now so that when paper restrictions were removed there would be no delay. We must also endeavour to publish the socialist classics and make all enquiries relative to copyright, publication costs etc. It was recognised that the expansion of activities suggested would make heavy demands on Head Office organisation but there were members who had the qualifications for this work and who would be willing to do it on a voluntary basis. The publication of a fortnightly "S.S." would render possible the appointment of a literature sales agent. If we made ourselves known nationally within the next three years there would be great repercussions in Great Britain and abroad. The E.C. should thoroughly go into the whole question and present the party with a report on possible future actions. The Edgware branch agreed with Bloomsbury's suggestions. The party should be set a definite programme as at the North Paddington election. There should be more activity in the branches and not so much reliance on Head Office. Street canvassing with the "S.S.", write-ups to the local press and personal contacts and appeals were recommended. Hackney branch

disagreed only with the suggested fortnightly S.S. as this could be as untopical as a monthly one, and considerable financial resources would be required for extensive advertising. A Marylebone delegate endorsed the general suggestions of Bloomsbury but claimed that they were not so easy to put into practice. Could we succeed in getting members to take full time positions in the provinces? There were difficulties in finance and accommodation. The attitude of the E.C. on finance did not encourage members to come forward. There was no difficulty in getting provincial members to do the work, but they needed support. We should aim to produce the same amount of activity in the provinces as in London.

Resolution - Clark and T. Judd (Islington) "Next business"

Lost by a large majority.

Camberwell questioned the composition of the party rather than its methods. The majority of the party were not industrial workers, and werhad no influence in the Trade Union movement. The "S.S." could be compared to the "New Statesman". Southend said that the Publicity Committee's report showed why we were not widely known when it was seen that proposed advertising in Trade Union journals had fallen through owing to the failure of the T.U. Advisory Committee to take action. S.W. London said that our task to-day was precisely the same as it was forty years ago, although there might be some variation in the manner in whcih it has to be performed. We had done a great deal in the last few years in the way of issuing pamphlets on matters of immediate interest. Why go to the provinces when there is so much work to be done in London? Everyone of our members should be an unpaid propagandist. A second Bloomsbury delegate regretted that so much of the discussion had revolved round the rival claims of London and the provinces for paid propagandists. Their memorandum should encourage members to write for the party. West Ham said that London branches should be able to look after their own propaganda. The 550 London members should produce 30 or 40 speakers. Branches should now go ahead along these lines now that war conditions had gone. West Ham branch were attempting to hold their own Speakers' Class.

Resolution - Nehan and Ross (Hackney) "That in view of the contentious and lengthy nature of 'Items for discussion xvi, xvii and xviii' a meeting be called of party members, and all these above items as well as the memorandum of Bloomsbury branch be considered thereat"

Hackney said that nothing concrete would come out of this discussion and the conference had a very heavy agenda to deal with. In opposition it was pointed out that provincial members could not be present at the party meeting.

Resolution - Mertons and Dickinson (Manchester) "That the vote be taken" Cd. 35-9.

The resolution was then Lost 13-37.

Paddington said that paid speakers were no solution to the problem of getting the necessary work done. The whole of the membership should get on with the job. At present only a few members were doing party work. Propaganda stations in London were falling into disuse because speakers were not available. Members could be urged to take up writing and speaking, but it was up to the members themselves, and if the party wanted more propaganda, members must become speakers. The campaign in North Paddington was different. There we had three months in whcih to do a certain job. A delegate said that there were twelve items on the Bloomsbury memorandum but so far only one had been discussed. Manchester said that they had recently done extensive canvassing, having sold 500 "S.S." in a few days. London workers always had

the opportunity of hearing our speakers, but this was not so in the provinces. It was not sufficient just to have a fortnightly "S.G.". It should be more simply written and the organisation should be linked up with factory gate meetings. Glasgow asked that we should not oppose London to the provinces but consider where the best results would be obtained. Glasgow had held nearly three meetings a week for twelve months and this was made possible by the hard work of the members. They would prefer to see the monthly "S.G." brought to a higher standard before starting a fortnightly. Another Manchester delegate asked the E.C. to assist provincial branches in carrying out propaganda. They should have co-ordinated the efforts of branches near each other like Eccles and Manchester. There was something wrong with the party's approach and presentation of its policy. Even experienced speakers sometimes failed to deal adequately with the immediate problems of the working class. Insufficient attention was paid to the Trade Union movement. Now methods of propaganda were required as at present only a small minority of the workers attended political meetings. The theoretical level of our literature was not high enough for politically minded workers, and not simple enough for the others. The party's most important task should be to produce literature readily understood by those who had very little political knowledge.

Resolution - George and D'Arcy (Bloomsbury) "That this conference declares that the immediate task confronting the party is that of making it well known nationally, and calls upon the E.C. immediately to consider and issue a report for the Autumn Delegate Meeting on ways of organising to this end"

Bloomsbury said that the E.C. had the available material, and they could easily carry out the terms of the resolution. Dartford said that our task was to make socialists, and that socialism could not be forced on the workers. The resolution sought to find some quick way.

Resolution - Bowie (Southend) and Clark (Islington) "That the vote be taken" Cd. 29-11.

The resolution was Cd. 43-0.

Resolution - Mertons and Dickinson (Manchester) "That this conference requests the E.C. to appoint a committee for the specific purpose of organising and supervising provincial propaganda" Cd. 20-10.

AMENDMENTS TO RULE

S.W. London branch. Rule 1, Line 9. "Delete sentence beginning 'The E.C. shall issue....' and insert 'The E.C. shall annually issue to each member a combined rules and membership card, showing the name, address, the registered number, date of enrolment and name of branch. The charge for such card being 3d.'" Cd. 32-21.

S.W. London branch. Rule 19, Line 2. "Insert after 'Treasurer' 'Assistant Treasurer'" Cd. 41-10.

Islington branch. Rule 19, Line 5. "Delete the word 'and' in the third line and insert after the word 'Trustees' '... and Chairman and Vice-Chairman who shall preside at Conference, Delegate Meetings and Special Party Meetings.'" Lost 9-53.

PROPAGANDA

(a) 1945 Delegate Meeting recommendation on Lincoln's Inn Fields meetings.

Resolution - Winnie and Barnes (Paddington) "That this conference recommends the E.C. to make arrangements for commanding mid-day meetings at Lincoln's Inn Fields and Beresford Square, and also to extend mid-day meetings"

In support it was claimed that speakers could be reimbursed for any working time lost through attending these meetings. Tower Hill should also be re-opened.

The resolution was Cd. 29-1.

(b) 1945 Delegate Meeting recommendation on Test for New Outdoor Speakers.

RESOLUTION (D) - Ross and Nehan (Hackney) "That the Party rescind the decision of the E.C. passed at the 42nd meeting, requiring members to pass a speakers' test before being allowed to speak at outdoor meetings."

Hackney said that this requirement would make more speakers available. Birmingham thought that the branches were the best judges of the capabilities of their members. Islington were in favour of the resolution as it would help small branches without experienced speakers. Newport raised the question of provincial branches who had no experienced speakers and whose members were unable to take the platform at all. The General Secretary said that the E.C. had recognised this difficulty in the past and had permitted Glasgow members to speak outdoors provided an experienced member, not necessarily a speaker, was present. West Ham claimed that ample opportunity was available to members to take the test if they were keen on speaking. Islington suggested that members who wanted to speak could start as chairman.

The resolution was Lost 17-49.

PARTIES ABROAD

Resolution - Lustigman and Billings (Paddington) "That this conference recommends the E.C. to provide for conference and delegate meetings a more detailed report on the overseas parties, including activities, membership etc."

The Overseas Secretary said that numerical strength of the overseas parties was not known, and suggested that for the time being this information was not of over-riding importance but that general information on activities etc. would probably be more useful.

The resolution was Cd. 35-0.

The Overseas Secretary said that it would help if members with knowledge of sympathisers or groups abroad would pass the information on to him. This was in answer to a question regarding groups in India. He added that R. Naboulez (France) was expected at the conference to give a report on activities on the Continent. M. Cullen (Dublin) gave a brief account of possibilities in Eire. There were two or three well known propaganda stations in Dublin and a sympathetic audience could be guaranteed if speakers could be sent over.

EDUCATION

(a) H.O. Library. One of the party Librarians said that a list of books in the library was available and that, with the E.C.'s permission, books could be lent to members in the provinces.

(b) H.O. Classes. The question of a correspondence course in writing for members in the provinces was raised. A member of the Editorial Committee said that this was gone into about three years ago, but it involved too much work for the members concerned. The Editorial Committee however, prepared notes for writers and they aimed to send comments on their articles to new writers. It was difficult to keep up to date with this. It was suggested that tutors should be sent to branches for the purpose of running classes, as a number of members found it difficult to attend H.O.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Item for discussion (xx) - Manchester branch. "The party's attitude to the transition period"

A Manchester delegate said that the views expressed by party members on this matter ought to be conditional, and that it was wrong to hold hard and fast views. Some thought that capitalism would go on under normal conditions with an ever increasing number of workers supporting socialism and then taking over. It was quite possible that when the workers did take over things would not be easy and comfortable. No definite answer could be given to those who wanted to know precisely what was going to take place, because the conditions that would exist at the time could not be known now. A member of the Editorial Committee said that there could be no useful discussion unless the delegates took account of the position of the party have always taken, what Manchester disagreed with in this, and what suggestions they could make. An article in the January "S.S." on the subject had not put the view that there would be an abrupt transition without giving an explanation. The change would be abrupt in the sense that one day the workers would be without control of the machinery of government for socialism and the next day with it. The general view outside the party was that the transition period was sometime prior to the establishment of socialism. This was the Labour Party attitude, and they held that the transition period was actually taking place now. It was difficult to satisfy outside workers on the question of what would be done after the capture of governmental power, but party speakers did not usually have any difficulty over the subject. As a number of members were probably not familiar with past party discussions and statements in the "S.S." on the subject, it might be as well for Manchester branch to discuss the "S.S." article referred to and circulate a memorandum to branches if they disagreed with it.

A S.W. London delegate said that there would be no transitional period, but economic changes resulting from the emancipation of the working class. A non-delegate said that the phrase 'transitional period' should not be used, the period would be one of reconstruction on a socialist basis. Leeds delegate raised the question of possibility of workers in one country gaining power with workers in other countries lagging behind. A West Ham delegate said that socialists elected in a majority to Parliament could not continue the wages system. When there was a majority of socialists in one country there would be large minorities in the others. Glasgow claimed that development all over the world was more or less similar and example in one country would act as a spur abroad.

An Ealing delegate stated that it was now necessary to conceive of socialism taking place at a time of world depression and shortage, and that it was no longer always possible to tell enquirers that there was always plenty and that there was no need for anyone to go without what they needed. A Glasgow delegate said that even if socialism was established immediately after a war, the agricultural resources would be largely untapped and production and distribution would be the least of our troubles. A non-delegate from Manchester thought that the party attitude on the question was not clearly stated. The January "S.S." said that we agreed with Marx and Engels on the subject. If so we must also agree with the transitional period as described in "The Critique of the Gotha Programme". There could be no basis for the claim that there would be no dictatorship of the proletariat. The problems of the workers were not the same all over the world. There was an unequal economic development and the next economic crisis would leave one set of workers less well off than the others. The political level of the American working class was lower than that of the British. Our propagandists were not dealing adequately with the question on the platform.

Some members expressed the wish to take a further part in discussion. Resolution - Dickinson (Manchester) and Isbell (Bloomsbury) "That members who have already spoken be permitted to take part in further discussion" Gd. 32-30.

A Bloomsbury delegate claimed that after the capture of power there would be a number of problems to solve. There might be a period of greed and it might be necessary for the State to issue orders for a time. S.W. London delegate said that the word "transition" had been confused with "transformation". The State would not exist to coerce. Exploitation was common to every capitalist country and in the course of time this must produce a similar reaction. A non-delegate said that the whole question was not one of party policy as had been urged, although it was a matter of interesting speculation and discussion. Party policy was aimed at capturing the machinery of government for socialism, and once this had taken place the task of the Socialist Party was finished. The job of reconstructing society on its new basis would then devolve on the workers. The discussion on the uneven development of capitalism failed to take into account the international character of the socialist movement. We already had the beginnings of this and in the future the working class would act internationally although restricted by capitalist national barriers. The varying levels of understanding of the workers of different countries was considerably exaggerated. A Marylebone delegate asked for more debates of this kind. These problems were not as easy as they seemed. Our object was as much economic as political. We did not exist just for the purpose of capturing political power, but we were a political party because class struggles were political. It had been said that no principle was involved, but party speakers were saying that there would be no transitional period and claiming it to be the party position. A member of the Editorial Committee said that while Manchester had emphasised that the transition period was after the workers had taken power, other contributors had dwelt largely on the difficulties of getting political power. It was obvious that the statements made in the "S.S." over a number of years were not known to all contributors. Our view was that it was a waste of time to worry about what was going to happen after power had been obtained. Economic problems arising then would be solved internationally and we cannot say now what will be decided. When dealing with the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" as put forward by Marx we referred to Engels' preface to the "Civil War in France". A West Ham delegate pointed out that the capitalist class itself was becoming more and more international in character. A non-delegate suggested that the unequal rate of national capitalist development was offset by the unequal rate at which socialist ideas gained acceptance. When other parties referred to "transition" they meant merely a change in capitalism itself and not the change from capitalism to socialism. A Camberwell delegate said that if there was a depression when socialism was established there would have to be readjustments to deal with it. A second member of the Editorial Committee said that it had never been suggested that the change from capitalism to socialism would be a smooth one, but that intelligent workers would know how to deal with the problems of distribution etc. Even to-day the working class did all the necessary work of society. A Manchester delegate in winding-up said that it appeared that the party position was that there was no "transitional period". Some members took an over-simplified view of every problem and this made our propaganda seem unconvincing. He could not agree that there would be a change over-night in society. The development of capitalism would lead to greater crises.

CONTINENTAL GREETINGS

A. Duboulez (France) was now present and was granted urgency to address the conference. He reported that there were very good prospects abroad. Two groups were meeting weekly in Paris, one in Lille and one in Strasbourg. He hoped to contact sympathisers in Belgium, and had been in contact with the Sozial Demokratische Party in Switzerland, who were very interested in our point of view. He asked that regular supplies of literature should be sent, all socialists abroad sent greetings to the conference.

Resolution - McLaughlin (Sr.) and Michell "That this conference send reciprocal greetings to comrades on the Continent, and pledges itself to do all in its power to render any assistance necessary to help them" Cd. 113.

PROPAGANDA (CONT.)

(e) Proposed further paid appointment. No action.

(d) Report on activities of Provincial Propagandist/Organiser.

RESOLUTION (x) - Allen and Mundel (Leeds) "That this conference deplores the action of the E.C. in appointing a provincial propagandist/organiser without terms of reference being previously drafted and supplied to party branches"

ADDITIONUM - Leeds branch "Add... and that in respect of any paid party position, terms of reference should first be submitted to all branches"

Leeds delegate regretted that there had been so little co-operation when Lester was in their area. He had apparently been sent to help them in organisation of propaganda but very little had been done. Leeds were not advised of the terms of reference which they gathered had been given to him and most of what they heard about his activities was merely by heresay. He considered that all this could have been avoided if terms of reference had been issued to branches. The experience in Leeds had borne fruit when Lester went to Glasgow with definite instructions to the Glasgow branch to organise his programme.

The additionum was Cd. 44-17. As sub. res. Cd. 35-24.

(e) Propaganda Statistics. No action.

(f) General.

Resolution - Matthews and Adams (Edgware) "That this conference deplores the fact that the Propaganda Committee did not arrange any indoor meetings in the Central London area on Sunday nights during the past winter season and recommends the E.C. to make greater efforts in that direction in the future" Lost 4-34.

Resolution - Billing and Walters (Paddington) "That this conference recommends the Propaganda Committee to endeavour to arrange for party speakers to address more 'other organisations', particularly Youth clubs" Agd.

Resolution - Adams and Matthews (Edgware) "That the E.C. be recommended to consider the appointment of a comrade who will visit, on request, branches in order to give occasional assistance and guidance in the running of branches speakers classes" Lost 3-20.

Item for discussion (iv) Manchester branch. No action.

Item for discussion (v) Hackney branch.

Resolution - Nolan and Wilson (Hackney) "That the party consider setting up a committee to explore all the possibilities of extending propaganda especially in view of the present financial resources"

Hackney claimed that the party should not hold more money than was necessary to pay routine accounts and that the major part of the money held should be spent in procuring more literature and paying further propagandists. Against the resolution it was said the a committee already existed for the purposes stated.

Resolution Lost 8-32.

The question of winter outdoor propaganda was raised, and opposition was expressed to the views of the Central Organiser on cutting down propaganda during the winter months. Examples were given of successful winter outdoor meetings which were valuable in assisting the successful running of indoor meetings.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

Resolution - Mertons (Manchester) and Howard (Bloomsbury) "That item (5) 'Literature' be taken first thing after lunch on Sunday" A.d.

MISCELLANEOUS RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION (G) - Matthews and Adams (Edgware) "That in view of the increasing administrative work of the party and that in order that the work of the party can be carried out more efficiently, a full-time or part-time paid Head Office assistant be appointed forthwith"

AMENDMENT - Howard and Lawrence (Bloomsbury) "That this conference is of the opinion that for the time being the party should be able to find volunteers to deal with the administrative work of the party at Head Office and that a full or part-time Head Office assistant should only be appointed after every effort has failed to find volunteers for this work"

AMENDMENT - McLaughlin (Sr.) and Lockwood (S.W. London) "That in the opinion of this conference appointments of this character should in the first place be the responsibility of the E.C."

The General Secretary said that the question of assistance at Head Office was at present under review by the E.C. Bloomsbury suggested that a typing pool could easily be organised and that literature distribution was being dealt with adequately on a voluntary basis. The payment of further propagandists should be considered of primary importance. Edgware felt that if extensive propaganda efforts were to be made sooting would have to be done to cope with the increased Head Office work which would be inevitable.

S.W. London amendment Lost 26-35.

Bloomsbury amendment Cd. 41-21.

Sub. res. Cd. 43-16.

RESOLUTION (H) - Clark and T. Judd (Islington) "That the clause in Conference Standing Orders referring to a vote of direction to the Chairman be deleted"

Islington were of the view that once conference had lost confidence in a chairman they should appoint another one. A non-delegate said that the Standing Order as framed at present could lead conferences to lengthy discussions on fine points of procedure. A good chairman would always accept direction from the conference up to a point. Against the resolution it was claimed that the object of the Standing Order was to enable conference to retain the services of a chairman even if they disagreed with him on a particular issue. Further it aimed at veeting complete control of the conference in the hands of the delegates.

Resolution was Lost 27-29.

PUBLICITY

The General Secretary was asked why nothing had been heard of the proposal sent to the Trade Union Advisory Committee regarding

circularising trade union branches inviting lectures from our speakers. He replied that for some time this committee had not been active.

PI C

(i) Statement of Accounts for year ending 31.12.45. No action.
(ii) Items of interest in Statement of Accounts.
TICK (V) - Nicolas (Leyton) and Lawrence (Finsbury) "That no branch be allowed to hold more than £30"

Leyton considered that branch funds over £50 should be put in common pool at Head Office for the use of branches in need. Against the resolution it was said that active branches might need more than £30 for their work, for example a branch contemplating an election campaign.

The resolution was Lost 7-60.

MISCELLANEOUS RESOLUTIONS (CONT.)

RESOLUTION (I) - Dickinson and Blane (Manchester) "That this conference instructs the E.C. to request the Editorial Committee, or a committee appointed ad hoc to invite suggestions for a modernisation of the wording of the Declaration of Principles"

Manchester pointed to wording such as "master class" and "muster under its banner" as examples of the out-of-date wording used. This made it difficult reading for newcomers to the party. Against the resolution it was said that the Declaration of Principles was a masterpiece of condensation, and even if it were re-worded the fresh wording would in time become out of date.

The resolution was Lost 11-34.

RESOLUTION (J) - Powis and Cottis (Southend) "That the E.C. be instructed to secure a supply of good quality party badges as soon as possible"

Southend regretted bringing this to conference but had been compelled to do so owing to the failure of the E.C. to take action in response to their requests. Party badges had a considerable propaganda value and should be available to members.
Resolution - Lawlor (Camberwell) and Robertson (Hackney) "That the vote be taken" Lost 21-23.

There was further brief discussion.

Resolution Lost 19-37.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Item for discussion (xix) - Manchester branch "The Party's attitude to the discovery of atomic energy"

Manchester said that very little had appeared in the "S.S." dealing with the implications of the discovery of atomic energy applied to warfare and industry. Some party speakers took the view that there was nothing out of the ordinary in this discovery, and others that it meant the end of human society. The party should make careful investigations and lay down a clear position on the subject. A Marylebone delegate said that the whole theory of politics and economics might be affected by this development and it might be necessary to review the whole of the position in regard to Marxian economics. Another Manchester delegate said that while his branch had brought forward this item, they did not necessarily have any suggestions to offer. A member of the Editorial Committee said that scientists themselves had not yet

to
re
tive
in
er
or
at
in
the
be
at
tive
tions.
d in
ther
as
as
as
of
in
to
ever
in
and
that
it
was
not
service
of
with
they
there
were
vast
social
implications
of
this
new
discovery.
There
was
no
guarantee
atomic
bomb.
There
was
much
division
on
the
whole
question.

(b) LITERATURE

Resolution - Clark (Islington) on "S.C." Committee. "That this Committee be requested to appoint a special committee to
style of the 'S.C.' with a view to altering
etc., to bring it up to date in keeping with modern methods

(c) Conference resolution on fortnightly "S.S.". No action.

(d) 1945 Co. resolution on topical pamphlets.

and Adams (Edmonton) "That this conference
pamphlet to materialise as a result of the
solution on 'topical pamphlets' is 'Is Labour
leading the way to Socialism?', and suggests that consideration
be given to the production of short pamphlets on the following
subjects - 'India', 'Valentino', 'Germany', 'UNO', 'Future of
Unemployment', and so on".
Amendment - Curtis and Brewster (Ealing). "Insert after 'Future of
Labour' the words 'Ato Z Survey'."
Amendment Cd. 18-8.
Sub. res. Cd. 20-0.

(e) Party pamphlets (see below).

Resolution - Clark (Islington) and J. Kerr (West Ham) "That the E.C.
be requested to investigate the possibilities of revising and re-
writing old pamphlets before reprinting, such as Nos. 9 and 12
("Socialism" and "The Socialist Party, its Principles and Policy")".

Islington said that the statistics and the references were now
completely out of date. The Editorial Committee replied that a
very limited number of members could do the highly specialised
work of revision, and the time of the Editorial Committee had been
fully taken up with the "S.C." and new pamphlets. As a result,
larger Editorial Committee would help to solve the problem. The
reply was given that the reverse was the case, but the committee
co-opted members to do certain work.

The resolution was Cd. 39-0.

Resolution - Mertens and Woolwood (Manchester) "That the Central Committee
recommends that in future, party pamphlets be written in a
simple and popular style even at the risk of being unable to deal
with the subject as fully as hitherto"

Manchester said that extensive quotations made pamphlets unwieldy and not easily understood by non-political workers. A West Ham delegate said that economics could not be put in a simpler form and properly explained at the same time. Manchester should give examples of what they wanted. Manchester replied that they had gained their impression as a result of direct contact with workers by canvassing.

Resolution Lost 12-18.

Resolution - Matthews and Adams (Edgware) "That this conference is of the opinion that the period of time between sending the copy of the 'S.S.' to the printer and the production of the 'S.S.' is too long and that efforts should be made to reduce this period to fourteen days at the most"

Resolution - Lawrence (Bloomsbury) and W. Kerr (West Ham) "Next business" Cd. by a large majority.

A member of the Editorial Committee asked for the views of conference on the use to which additional paper supplies should be put if the allocation was increased within the next few months. Should it be used to increase the size of the "S.S.", increase the circulation, or to publish more pamphlets?

Resolution - McLaughlin (S.W. London) and Williams (Lewisham) "That the question of the use of any surplus paper that may become available be left to the discretion of the E.C." Agd.

Resolution - Adams and Matthews (Edgware) "That this conference recommends that 20,000 copies of the leaflet 'Introducing the S.P.G.B.' be printed" Agd.

(f) Publications from J. A. Dawson. The General Secretary stated that a full statement had now been received from the Socialist Party of Australia dealing with Dawson and that a copy of this statement had been circulated to all branches a few days prior to the conference.

Resolution - Michell and Whale (Bloomsbury) "That this conference recommends the E.C. to circularise all branches regarding their relationship with J. A. Dawson informing them of his non-socialist activities"

Bloomsbury said that some members were still distributing Dawson's literature to the public and the E.C. should make a clear statement on the position. The General Secretary said that the E.C.'s relations with Dawson were determined by the position taken up by the Socialist Party of Australia, and it was improbable that members would continue to distribute his literature to the public or send him letters for publication after reading the statement referred to previously.

Resolution was Lost 12-22.

RESOLUTION (A) - Adams and Matthews (Edgware) "That the E.C. set up a sub-committee of three members with a knowledge of design and layout to be responsible for the production of cover designs for any future pamphlets the party may publish"

Considerable criticism was levelled at recent cover designs and examples were passed round of what was considered to be suitable lay-outs. The General Secretary read a letter the E.C. had recently sent to Edgware branch explaining the difficulties of producing cover designs which would meet with the approval of all or most members.

Resolution - Lawlor (Camberwell) and Robertson (Hackney) "That the vote be taken" Cd. 33-3.

Resolution was Cd. 42-16.

RESOLUTION (B) - Robertson and Tobias (Hackney) "That" revised edition of 'War and the Working Class' be printed forthwith"
AMENDMENT - Curtis and Toll (Ealing) "That 'forthwith' be deleted and 'as soon as possible' inserted"

Hackney said that they had had this item on the agenda for a number of years and nothing had happened. Could the revision be farmed out by the Editorial Committee? Paddington wanted an entirely new pamphlet written as in any event revision would be as large a task as re-writing. It was asked whether revision was not already in hand as this had been stated in the report to the Delegate Meeting. A member of the Editorial Committee said that they were suffering from great pressure of work at the moment, and this pamphlet had not been considered for some months past.

Amendment Cd. 37-26. As sub. res. Cd. 43-20.

RESOLUTION (G) - Robertson and Tobias (Hackney) "That the party make every effort to acquire a bookshop in Central London"
AMENDMENT - Gross (Palmers Green) and Kilpatrick (Marylebone) "That this conference is of the opinion that branches where possible should acquire bookshops in their own districts and not centralise"

Amendment Lost 9-51. Resolution Lost 15-51.

(9) ELECTORAL ACTIVITY

Item for discussion (x) Executive Committee "Should branches set into being machinery for contesting as large a number of constituencies at the next General Election as possible"

Item for discussion (xi) Executive Committee "The desirability of the party contesting the next General Election even should it be found that the branch machinery is not adequate to cope with the tasks in the constituency or constituencies chosen"

Item for discussion (xii) Executive Committee "In future parliamentary elections shall the parliament rv candidate, election agent and parliamentary committee be nominated by the branch in the constituency and the nominations go before the E.C."

Resolution - Toll and Brewer (Ealing) "That the decisions registered at the party meeting called to discuss electoral action which now appear as items for discussion nos. x, xi and xii be not discussed at this conference but be referred back to the Executive Committee for their action"

Ealing objected to a party meeting being held and decisions being registered if these decisions were not acted upon by the E.C. and trusted that further time should not be spent in discussing questions that had already been fully dealt with by party members. Another delegate asked that the questions should again be discussed as provincial members were present.

Resolution was Cd. 25-19.

Item for discussion (xiii) Executive Committee "That branches should be encouraged to build up the necessary organisation in a chosen constituency"

Paddington agreed that branches should be encouraged, although they should not need that encouragement. There should be canvassing in the branches' areas to make the party known. Give members work to do who are not able to write or speak. Branches should co-operate with a view to fighting elections.

Resolution - May (Paddington) and Mertons (Manchester) "That this conference recommends that branches should be encouraged to build up the necessary organisation in a chosen constituency"

Paddington said that the necessary organisation included in finding out the number of halls, wards etc., providing means of mobilising "members for the campaign, and the time to do this was now. He should act as if elections were going to be held in the next few months. Another Paddington delegate said that we should become acquainted with the methods of running elections. In opposition it was said that information could be obtained at the time of the election and that members would be better engaged in other tasks at the present time.

Resolution Cd. 48-1.

Item for discussion (xiv) Executive Committee "Shall North Paddington constituency be contested at any future by-election or general election?"

Resolution - Instigian and Finn (Paddington) "That this conference is of the opinion that the north Paddington constituency be contested at any future election, and if possible at a by-election should the occasion arise"

Amendment - Adams and Matthews (Edware) "That North Paddington constituency be contested at any future election only if that branch is strong enough to cope adequately with the tasks involved"

Amendment - D'Arcy and Howard (Bloomsbury) "That the question of contesting North Paddington be deferred until election time".

Paddington said that a lot of the ground work had been done and answering the amendment said that no branch was likely to be in a position to fight the next election on its own. Settle the area now and this will give an idea of the work to be done. Bloomsbury claimed that it was premature to fix on a constituency at once. The possibility of smaller constituencies should be considered.

Edware amendment Lost 4-3.

Bloomsbury amendment lost 16-30.

Paddington resolution Cd. 32-6.

Resolution - Walters and Billing (Paddington) "That this conference recommends the E.C. to set up a permanent central parliamentary committee to co-ordinate the party's electoral activities"

Cd. 38-2.

Resolution - Billing and Walters (Paddington) "That this conference is of the opinion that at the present stage of the party's development the party should concentrate on parliamentary rather than municipal activities"

Resolution - Lawrence and D'Arcy (Bloomsbury) "That this resolution be referred to the Autumn Delegate Meeting" Agd.

(5) LITERATURE (CONT.)

Items for discussion (vi) (vii) (viii) and (ix).

Resolution - Marton (Mincetor) and Howard (Bloomsbury) "That the report of the 2nd E.C. be adopted and items for discussion vi, vii, viii and ix be referred to the Autumn Delegate Meeting" Agd.

FOUNDER MEMBERS

During the conference the chairman introduced Comrades Mr. Clarke and Mr. Harrold (Sr.) (two of the three remaining founder members of the party) to the conference. It was agreed to send a fraternal message to the third founder member, Comrade T. King, who was unable to be present.

Conference terminated at 6 p.m. on Sunday 21st April, 1946.

Rugby Chambers, London, W.C.1.

C. C. GROVES
General Secretary.

DELEGATION

1st Day - 58 delegates representing 23 branches

2nd Day - 56 " " 21 "

3rd Day - 50 " " 23 "

Dagenham branch was not represented.

Collections amounting to £16.18. 6 were taken during the proceedings.